

Bill Mitchell's Two Passenger Corvair

While small car enthusiasts around the world were enjoying their new GM Corvairs, at the Design Center Vice President Bill Mitchell was hard at work developing a two passenger variant. Mitchell had been a committed sports car enthusiast and racer for many years, so it is not difficult to understand why a two passenger Corvair was a perfectly logical next step for him to propose for the Corvair brand.

1962 Two Passenger Corvair Concept Model: The shortened wheelbase and resulting new proportions are easy to see in the side view image taken in the Design Auditorium in the fall of 1962. In addition to the competition roll-bar, Mitchell also had the designers add new rear quarter and rocker panel trim. The chrome-plated wire wheels were one of Mr. Mitchell's signature design elements that he used on many of his concept vehicles.

In the front view which shows the top in the up-position, we can see that in addition to the classic racing stripes, Mitchell had a new bumper design developed. The perfectly straight reflections in the Corvair's paint clearly shows that body and paint work came from Design's excellent prototype shops.

Note front end treatment. The rear compartment photo shows that this one-off two passenger Corvair was a fully functional concept vehicle. Note the added cross-car brace that stiffens the body and provides support for the convertible top cover. We can also see part of the one-off door trim design and the chrome stripes holding down the rear compartment carpeting. The chrome stripes on the carpeting are another classic Bill Mitchell feature.

Top folded into boot well. One can only speculate at this point as to why the two passenger Corvair was not approved for production. It would have made an exciting addition to the Corvair lineup. No doubt GM was already aware of the gathering storm clouds that were soon to overtake the Corvair.



Tucson Corvair Association



Established 1975

The Corvairsation is a monthly publication of the Tucson Corvair Association, which is dedicated to the preservation of the Corvair model of the Chevrolet Motor Division of General Motors. The Tucson Corvair Association is a chartered member of the Corvair Society of America (CORSA) as Chapter 357.

Membership dues are \$15 per year for individuals and \$18 for families. Initial dues are \$19 for individuals and \$22 for families (includes name tags). Make checks payable to the Tucson Corvair Association.

Change of Address: Report any change of address or phone number to the Membership Chairperson. Do not report such changes to the Corvairsation Editor.

CORSA membership dues are \$38 per year (\$76 for 26 months) and include a subscription to the CORSA Communique, a monthly publication. CORSA memberships is not required for membership in the Tucson Corvair Association, but is highly recommended. See any TCA officer for more information.

Classified ads are free to members and \$3 per 4-line ad for non-members. Deadline for materials submitted for publication is the 10th of the month.

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TCA 2009/10 Events at a Glance

**NO REGULAR
MEETING IN
DECEMBER
See you at the
Christmas party!!!**

- Fri, Dec 11** Annual TCA Christmas Party; Cody's Beef 'n Beans, 2708 E Ft Lowell, 6:30pm. Bring some cans for the food bank and a gift to exchange.
- Wed, Jan 6** Meeting of the Board of Directors. 7:00pm at Bill Maynard's Last Chance Garage. Everyone welcome!
- Sat, Jan 23** Tubac Car Show. We'll meet and caravan to the show together. More details later.
- Wed, Jan 27** Regular Monthly Meeting. Parking Lot Bull Session at 6:30pm. Meeting starts at 7:00pm. Golden Corral, 1st Ave and Wetmore.
- February** Renaissance Festival, Florence Junction, Arizona. More details to come.

I'll Be Home For Christmas

By Paul Niedermeyer - December 24, 2007

Santa came early in 1972. My older brother had taken a civilian job on a military base in Greenland. Out of the blue, he gave me his 1963 Corvair. It was my very first set of wheels. Instead of bracing myself for the thousand mile-long hitchhike from Iowa to Baltimore in freezing weather, I was driving home for Christmas in comfort. But there was a catch: Santa had deputized me. I had a present to deliver, and deliver I would, come hell or high snow.

My brother was flying in from Baltimore for the Christmas holiday. To repay him for the gifted Corvair, I promised to give his long-suffering girlfriend a ride to our family home. I was really jazzed to see everyone; my sister was coming from Alaska. I envisioned a smooth journey and a joyous reunion.

Although I was already a walking automotive encyclopedia, my practical experience was limited to oil changes. My most ambitious wrenching to date: pulling the cylinder head off the lawn mower years earlier. And it never ran quite the same again. But like most first-time male car owners of my age, I was brimming with mechanical enthusiasm and imagining all kinds of improvements. But it was winter in Iowa and I had no garage. I was just thankful it ran.

Just a few days before the big trip, an ominous metallic clattering arose from the depths of the Corvair's engine compartment. It would change its timbre when I depressed the clutch pedal. The problem clearly originated in the bell housing.

I weighed all the symptoms, scratched my [then] hirsute head and declared a diagnosis: a bad clutch throw-out bearing. I knew it wasn't the sound they normally make when they die, but I was stumped for an alternative theory. And forget about getting a second opinion. Nineteen year olds are unassailable experts at everything— unless proven otherwise

I had heard about a co-op garage, where shade tree mechanics could rent semi-warm floor space by the day. I bought a new bearing and drove a couple of miles into the frozen countryside to discover a few hippies attending to their VW buses.

My tool inventory: a box of cheap wrenches and a scissors jack. Normally, the 250lb engine would be lowered on a cradle with the car on a lift. My improvised solution: unhook everything, take the rear wheels off, lower the body until the engine rested on a timber, wiggle and slide the engine back a bit, jack the body up, and then slide the engine out. The only help I got was from John Mayall; it blared on auto-repeat all day.

Miraculously, everything went back together, and it fired right up – with the clanging! I was totally devastated. I broke the bad news to “the present” and my family. I could still hitchhike out alone, but I wasn't really up for it now. But they kept the faith.

I needed divine intervention. The next afternoon, I saw a Corvair outside a small machine shop; a sign. I entered its machine oil-scented environs and related my sad story to the white-haired owner. With a twinkle in his eye, he told me that



the rivets in two-piece Corvair flywheels come loose and cause that sound. “I’ll fix it for \$10 bucks.”

Back to John Mayall’s blues and the co-op garage. By the time I finally got the flywheel out, it was 1AM and ten degrees. I’ll never forget that three-mile walk back into town, under a starry sky, carrying that heavy flywheel. A wise(r) man bearing his heavy gift.

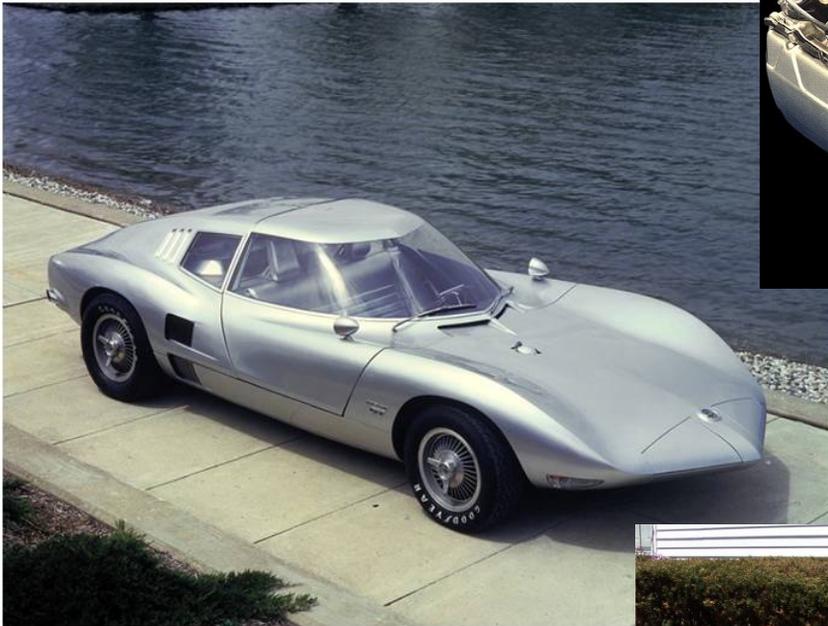
The next day was the twenty-second. I got the flywheel riveted and put it all together again— a lot more quickly the second time ‘round. I fell exhausted into bed that night, anticipating the next day’s drive. But deep in my heavy, youthful slumber, I suddenly bolted awake (hooves on the roof?). It was 3AM. I looked out the window, and snow was coming down so thick, I could hardly see the street light. And there was already six inches on the ground.

Blizzards blew in from the west. I decided to go for it; I’d try and outrun the wintry blast. It was now or never. With its rear-engined traction, the newly-purring Corvair cut the only set of tracks through Iowa City that night.

I-80 was deserted; we were the only drivers foolhardy enough to be out there, or maybe they were covered by the swirling snow. Luckily, I’d practiced for this. I had the right car for the job. And I relished the challenge. I worked-up my speed to about forty, hoping the storm wasn’t moving faster than us. Once across the Mississippi, the snow started to thin. My brother’s present and I shared a relieved smile. We’d be home for Christmas.



Potential Christmas Gifts for the Man You Love





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Regular Monthly Meetings are held on the Fourth Wednesday of every month with a bull session starting at 6:30pm with the meeting starting at 7:00pm.

The November meeting is held on the third Wednesday. The December meeting is our annual Christmas party with the time and place to be announced.

Monthly Meeting Place:

Golden Corral, 1st Avenue and Wetmore, Tucson, Arizona.



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